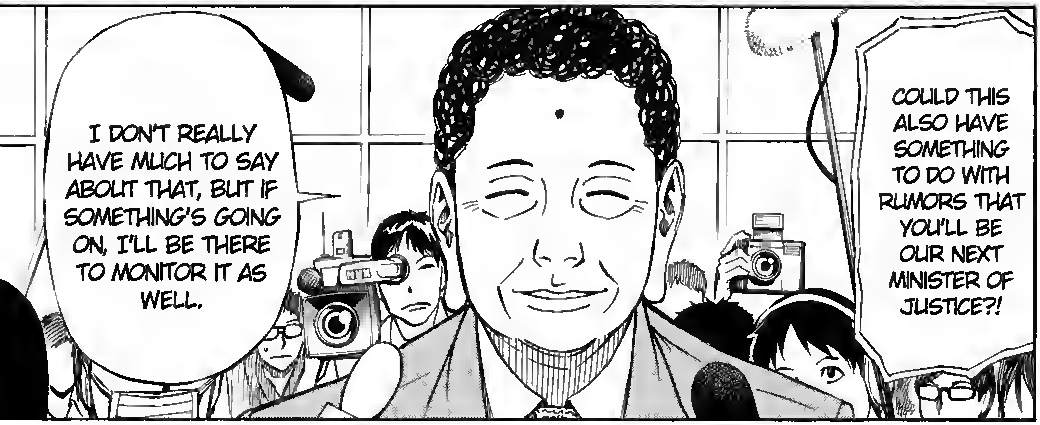
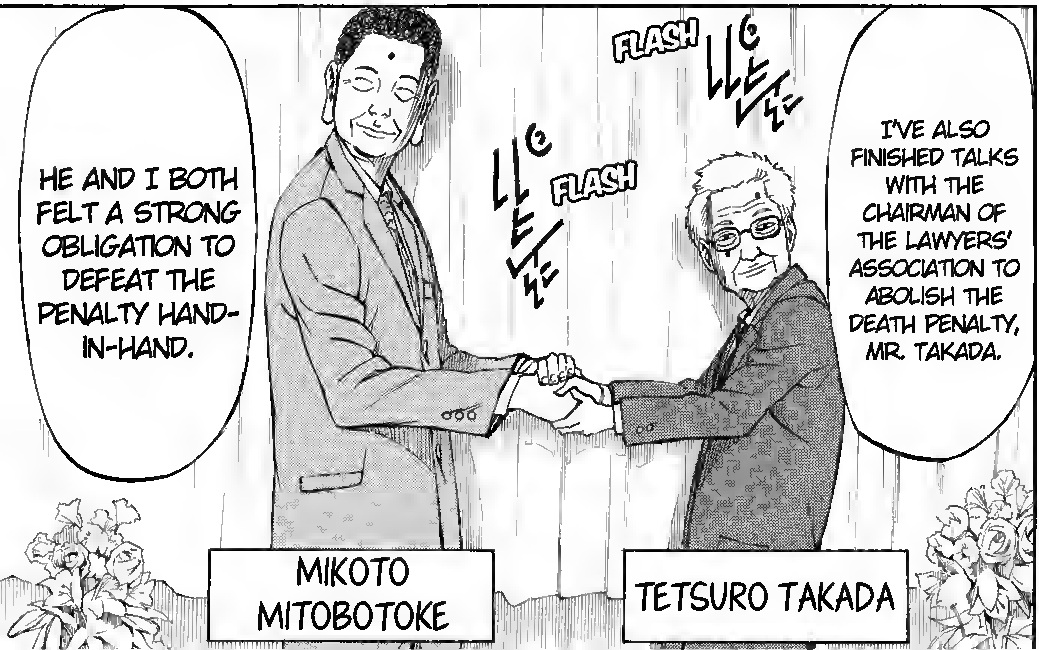
SUKEDACHI NINE
助太刀09

COULD YOUR OPINIONS HAVE INFLUENCED THEIR DECISION, MR. MITOBO-TOKE?!
THE GOVERNMENT HASN'T GIVEN ANY DETAILS BEHIND THEIR SUSPENSION OF ALL RETALIATION ACTIVITIES!
mirror:20


I DON'T REALLY HAVE MUCH TO SAY ABOUT THAT, BUT IF SOMETHING'S GOING ON, I'LL BE THERE TO MONITOR IT AS WELL.
COULD THIS ALSO HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH RUMORS THAT YOU'LL BE OUR NEXT MINISTER OF JUSTICE?!


HE AND I BOTH FELT A STRONG OBLIGATION TO DEFEAT THE PENALTY HAND-IN-HAND.
FLASH
FLASH
I'VE ALSO FINISHED TALKS WITH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY, MR. TAKADA.
MIKOTO MITOBOTOKE
TETSURO TAKADA

MIRROR:20 "MIRROR"

...IS... ALIVE?!
MY BROTHER YUUICHI...
CLENCH
GRAB
I THOUGHT IT WAS YOU AT FIRST... BUT I'M SURE IT WAS YOUR BROTHER I MET BEFORE...
PLIP
SEN-PAI!
YOUR HAND ...!

SENPAI!! LET GO OF HER! SHE HAS THAT DEFENSIVE ANTI-MALE REFLEX!!
OW!
DID YOU REALLY MEET MY BROTHER?! WHEN?! WHERE?!
!?
FWUP
S-SORRY..
.....
!!
THEN WAS THAT HOODED FIGURE SENPAI'S OTHER SELF...?
I FELT NO URGE TO FORCE HIM OFF ME!
IT HAPPENED THEN, TOO.
THERE IT IS AGAIN...
KRIK

I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING ANYMORE...
BUT...
...I FEEL...
.....?
...THAT THERE'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT...
...ABOUT HIS TOUCH...
!?
...KOUTA.
TRY TOUCHING ME ON THE SHOULDER.
NO WAY, RYOKO-CHAN!
YOU FINALLY CONQUERED YOUR FEAR OF MEN!!
I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU...!
SNIFF ...!
SWIPE

SHUDDER
SKK
KK
KKF
CLUNGG
POW
AH!
.....
.....
WHY... ME...?
WHA...

B2
B1
B1
TPP
TPP
CRICK
JUST WANTED TO CELEBRATE YOUR APPOINTMENT AHEAD OF TIME.
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE COLD IF I DIDN'T CONGRATULATE YOU IN PERSON.
WHAT'S THIS? WEREN'T YOU GOING TO AVOID CONTACT WITH ME FOR A WHILE?
THANK YOU, REGARD—
B5
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TOO EARLY TO DO THAT JUST YET?
DON'T BE SO HUMBLE, NOW.

PFASSH
THUK
--LESS?
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?
LIKE YOU SAID, IT'S TOO EARLY TO CELEBRATE.
TO REALLY GET RID OF THE DEATH BY RETALIATION SYSTEM, WE NEED TO TAKE THIS ONE STEP FURTHER.
KILLING YOU WOULD DEFINITELY MAKE HIM THE TARGET OF SUSPICION AND CRITICISM.
YOU AND THAT OGRE-MINISTER ARE AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER.
THIS? WELL...
SLRRCH

YOU...
...BAS... TARD!!
FROM THE BEGINNING, YOUR ROLE WAS SIMPLY TO BE THE FIGUREHEAD...
...THAT WOULD ALLOW ME TO DRAG THE CURRENT MINISTER OF JUSTICE OFF HIS THRONE.
KRUSH
THMP
YOU SHOULDA GIVEN ME THAT LOOK THE LAST TIME WE MET!
HA HA!
SLLP

DIET MEMBER MIKOTO MITOBOTOKE, CONSIDERED THE ONE MOST LIKELY TO BE THE NEXT MINISTER OF JUSTICE, HAS BEEN KILLED.

Diet member Mikoto Mitobotoke

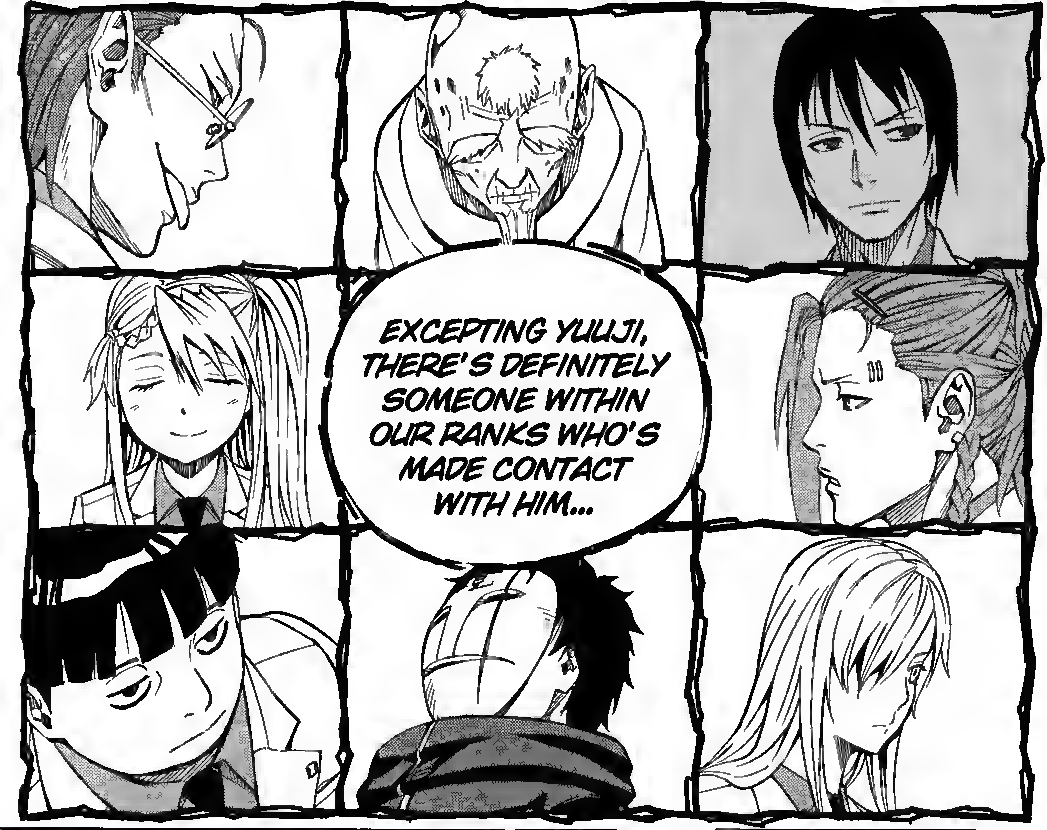
INVESTIGATORS RECEIVED TIPS THAT MINISTER ONIZUKA, WITH WHOM MITOBOTOKE HAD AN ANTAGONISTIC STANDING, MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE MURDER. THEY ARE PROCEEDING CAREFULLY WITH THE INVESTIGATION...

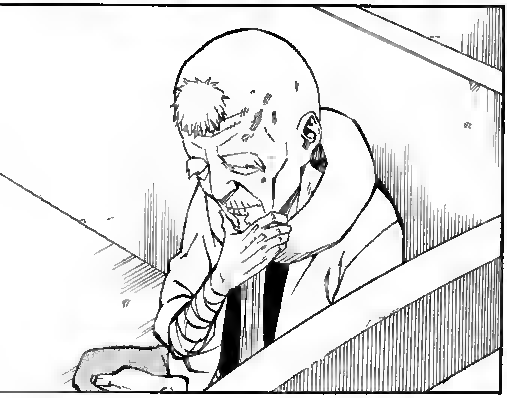
SO THAT'S HOW THEY'RE PLAYING THE GAME...

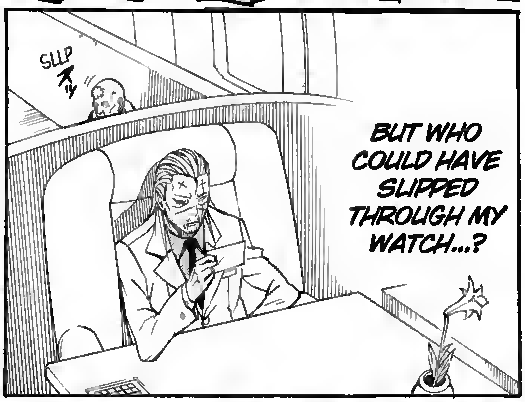
THE GUY WHO MURDERED MITOBO-TOKE...

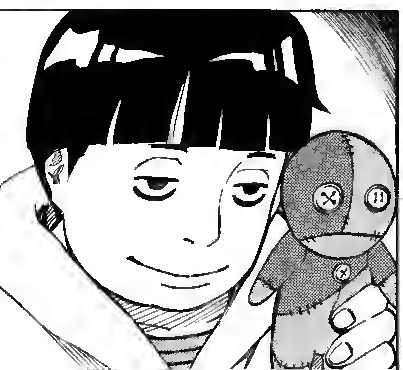
INOCHI

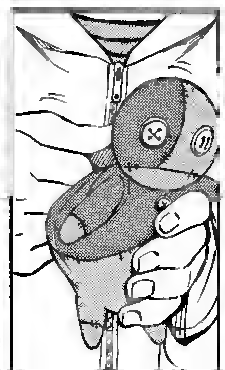
...IS LIKELY THIS MAN THAT SAKURADA MARKED...

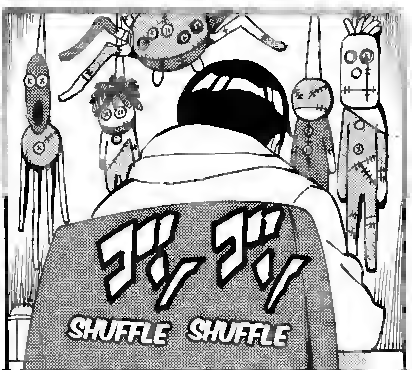

EXCEPTING YUUJI, THERE'S DEFINITELY SOMEONE WITHIN OUR RANKS WHO'S MADE CONTACT WITH HIM...

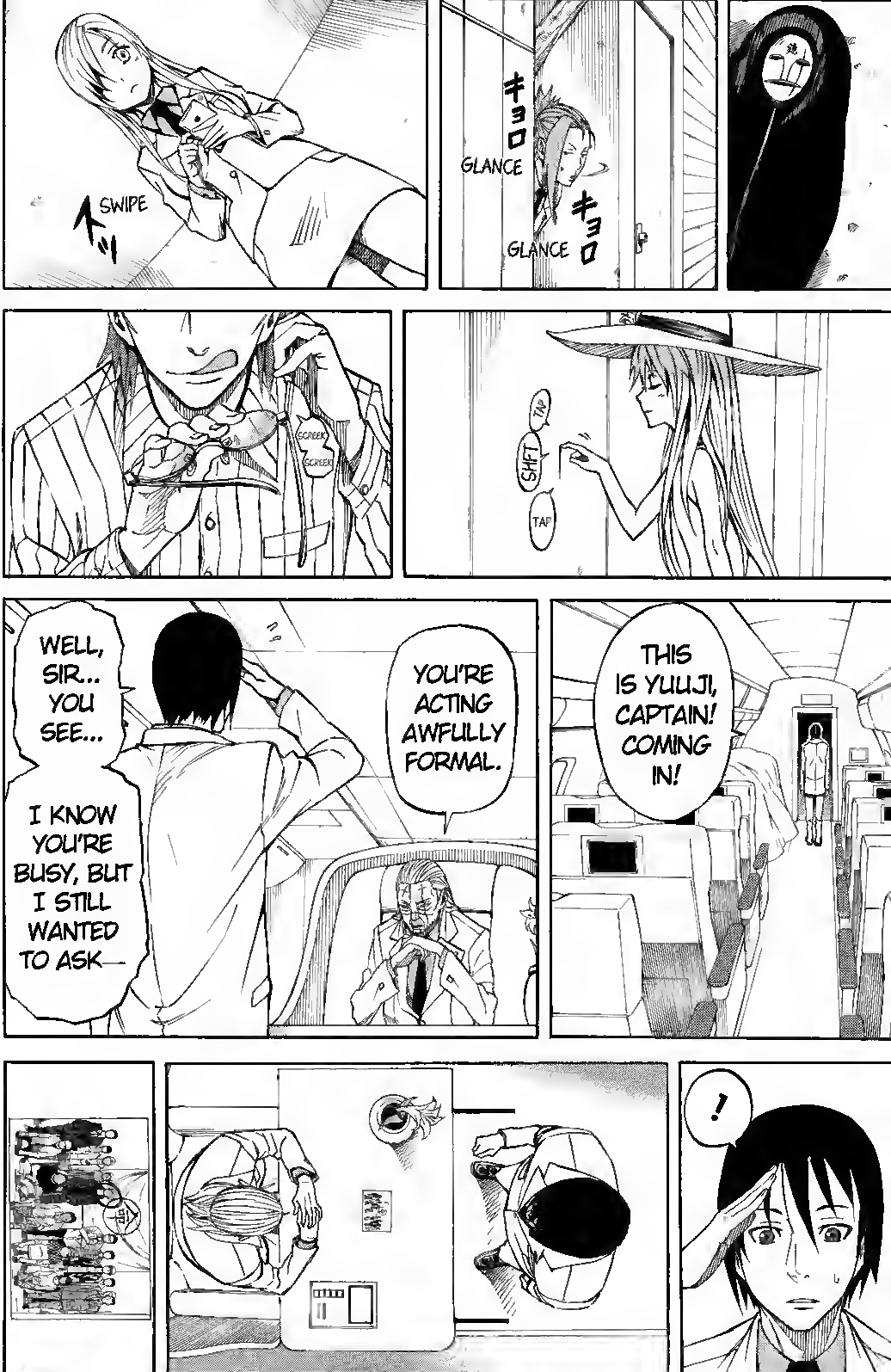



SLLP
BUT WHO COULD HAVE SLIPPED THROUGH MY WATCH...?






SHUFFLE SHUFFLE


SWIPE
キョロ
GLANCE
GLANCE
キョロ
SCREEK
SCREEK
TAP
SHIFT
TAP
WELL, SIR... YOU SEE...
I KNOW YOU'RE BUSY, BUT I STILL WANTED TO ASK—
YOU'RE ACTING AWFULLY FORMAL.
THIS IS YUUJI, CAPTAIN! COMING IN!
!

THIS SHOULD HELP ABOLISH THE RETALIATION SYSTEM FOR SURE...

THIS IS THE END FOR THAT OGRE.

BREAKING NEWS JUST IN. NORIKO TAKADA, THE WIFE OF TETSURO TAKADA, WAS JUST MURDERED.

Mr. Takada and Wife

MR. TAKADA HAD CLOSE TIES TO RECENTLY-MURDERED DIET MEMBER MIKOTO MITOBOTOKE AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY.

POLICE FOUND A MAN WIELDING A BLOOD-SPLATTERED HAMMER AT THE SCENE, AND PROMPTLY SUBDUED HIM.

AT THAT POINT, THE MAN BEGAN SHOUTING INDISCERNIBLE WORDS.

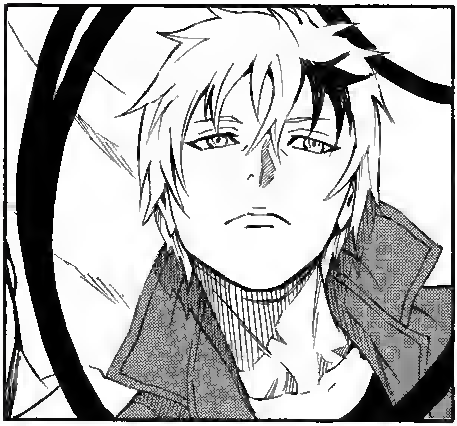
!

WHO THE HELL'S THIS GUY, INTERRUPTING THE FLOW OF EVENTS?

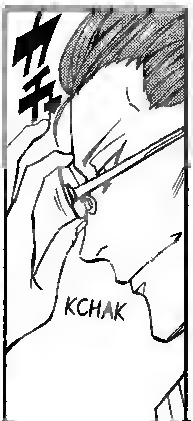
CRICK

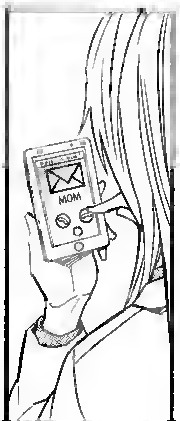
JEEZ... LOOKS LIKE I'LL JUST HAVE TO ADVANCE THE SCENARIO MYSELF.

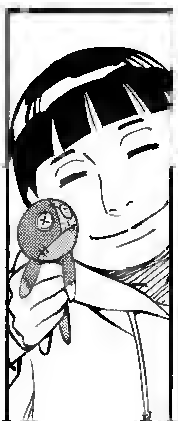
FSHHHHH

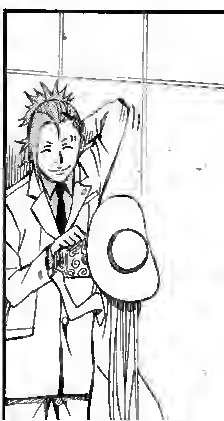


HUHN? THIS GUY...
!


KCHAK


MOM



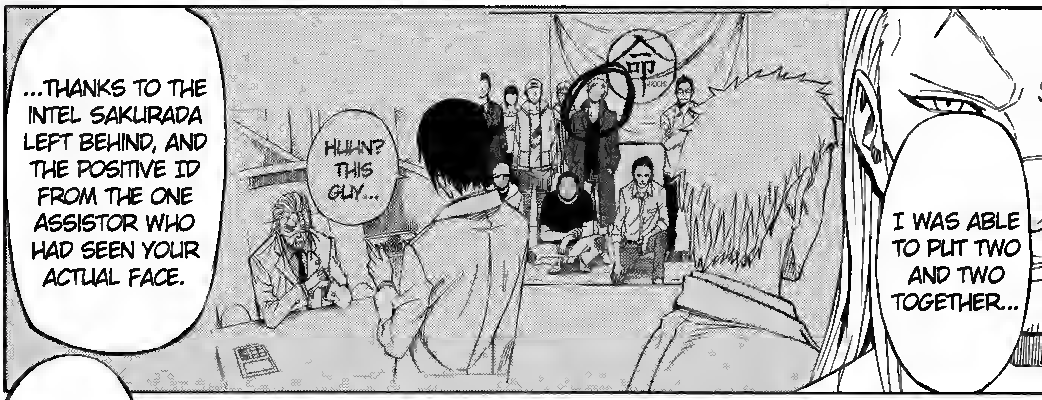


SQUIRK
FSHHWW
FSHHHH
TIME TO RETIRE THIS IDENTITY.
...YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO...
SO NEXT...
YOU... ARE NO ONE.

...PLAY THE MIRROR MASK TO THE END.
鏡

KREEEG
!?
HMMN? WHERE'S EVERYONE ELSE?
WHAT'S HAPPENING, CAPTAIN? IT'S A BIT EARLY TO DRESS UP LIKE THAT, NO?
NO ONE WILL BE SHOWING UP TODAY.
I SEE.
SO THE CAT'S OUT OF THE BAG...
鏡

HOW DID YOU FIGURE OUT MY ROLE IN ALL OF THIS...?
CHIK
カチャ
LET ME ASK YOU, CAPTAIN.
I SEE YOUR LOVE OF TRICKERY TOWARDS OTHERS IS UNCHANGED...
...KYOUGEN.
YOU WEAR A MASK, AND YOU PRETEND TO SLEEP THROUGH OUR AFFAIRS...


...THANKS TO THE INTEL SAKURADA LEFT BEHIND, AND THE POSITIVE ID FROM THE ONE ASSISTOR WHO HAD SEEN YOUR ACTUAL FACE.
HUH!? THIS GUY...
I WAS ABLE TO PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER...

AH HAH... THAT ONE TIME.
BLUSH!
M-MY MASK ?!
BLUSH
ポッ
ドロロ
RUMBLE
カラン
Clatter
Clatter
カラン
YUUJI?
KYOU-GEN-SAN?!

...I'LL HAVE TO FINISH YOU ALL OFF, STARTING WITH YUUJI.
IN THAT CASE...
SLLP
...I BECOME NOTHING MORE THAN A MIRROR!
THE MOMENT I PUT THIS MASK ON...
DASH KYOU-GEN!!

KRAKK
TCHK
TCHK
IF I MUST SAY IT, THEN RIGHT NOW...
OUR MOVES ARE THE SAME...
.....
...I'M YOUR REFLECTION. I'M YOU.

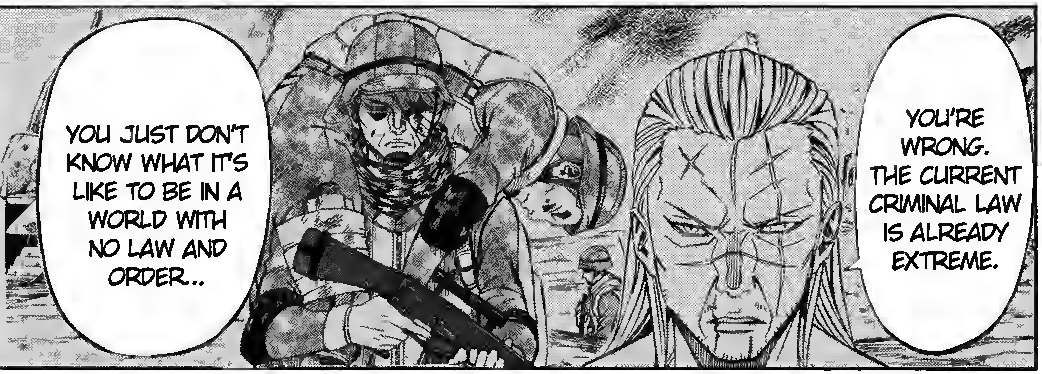
THAT'S WHY... YOU'LL PAY IF YOU... LEAVE ME BEHIND.
WHICH MAKES YOU... ME...
I'M... YOU... ODA...
THEN ZIP YOUR LIP FOR A BIT, CHAN.
YOU'LL PAY ALSO... IF YOU DIE...
ONE DAY...
WE'LL BUST OURSELVES... OUT OF THIS... MESSED-UP WORLD... ONE DAY...

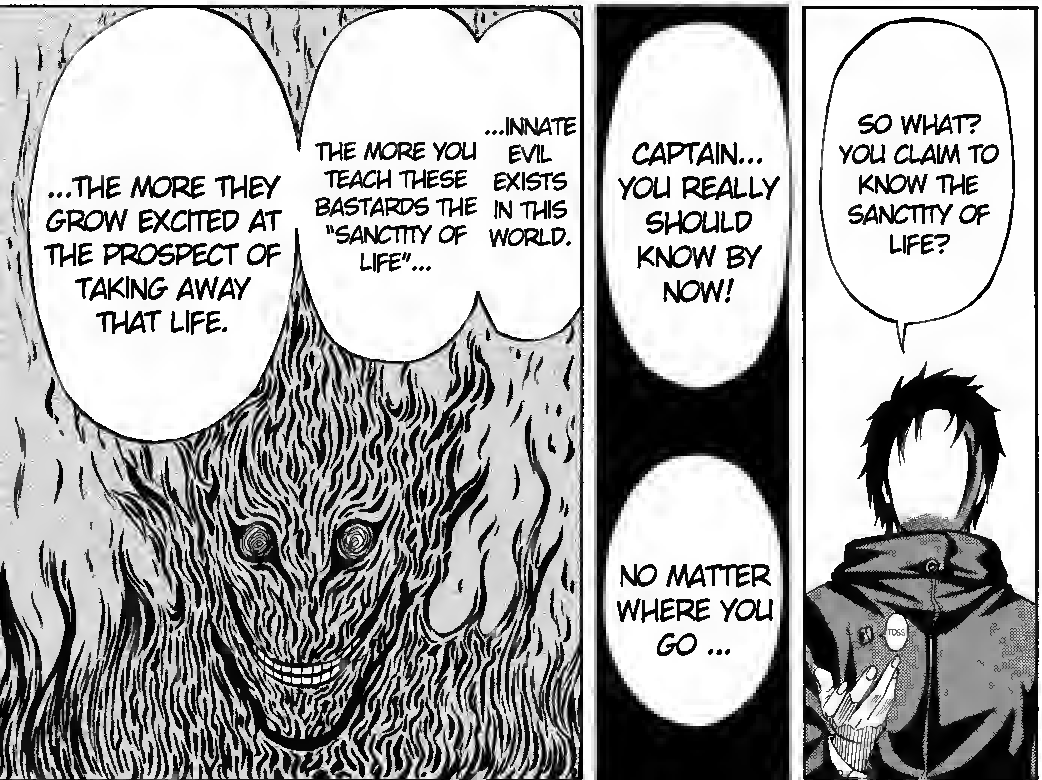
SKUFF
SKUFF
.....
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
AGAINST YOUR OWN FIGHTING STYLE!
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU'RE FACING OFF AGAINST YOURSELF!!
TUP
TUP
YOUR OWN MOVES !!

KTHAK
EVEN YOUR OWN QUIRKS !!
ONLY MY THINKING'S DIFFERENT FROM YOURS.
IT SEEMS YOU'RE NOT JUST IMITATING ME.
...INDEED.
SKSHSHSH
KICK

EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A PART OF THE ANTI-RETALIATION FACTIONS...
...WHY WOULD YOU ADVOCATE FOR THE MURDER OF OTHERS SO READILY?
YOU GOT ME WRONG, CAPTAIN.
SNAP
I DON'T WANT TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY ITSELF.
WHAT I'M REALLY TRYING TO DO...
SQUEEZE
...IS ABOLISH A DEFECTIVE DEATH BY RETALIATION SYSTEM.
EVEN IF WE COULD PREDICT WHEN A VIOLENT CRIME IS ABOUT TO OCCUR...
...THE POLICE AND THE COURTS CAN'T DO ANYTHING UNTIL AFTER THE CRIME IS COMMITTED.
BUT AT THAT POINT... IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE.
WAY TOO LATE...

GRIP
THAT'S HOW THE WORLD IS RIGHT NOW...
...CRIME WILL NOT GO DOWN.
AS LONG AS PUNISHMENTS UNDER CURRENT LAW EXIST...
.....


YOU JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE IN A WORLD WITH NO LAW AND ORDER..
YOU'RE WRONG. THE CURRENT CRIMINAL LAW IS ALREADY EXTREME.

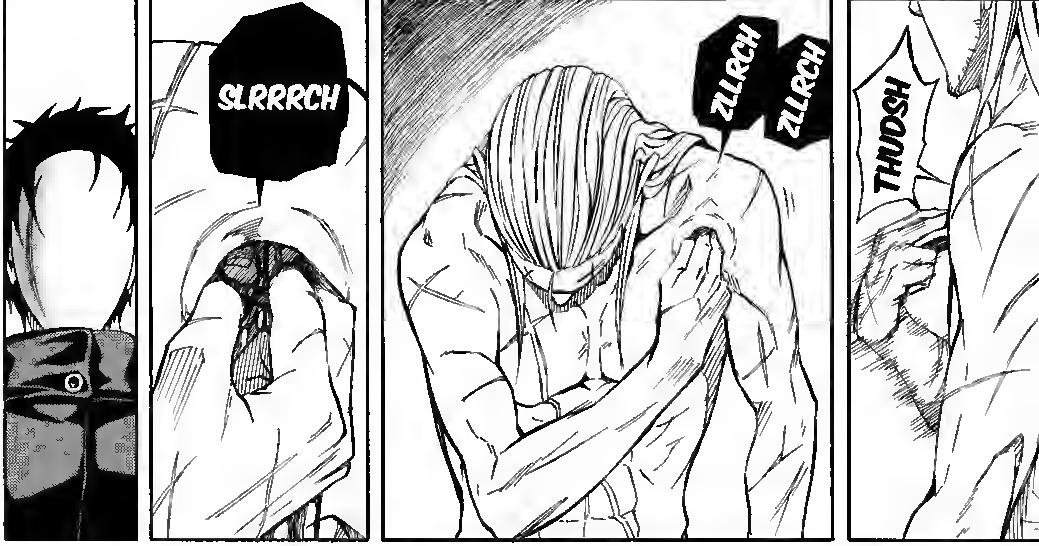

...THE MORE THEY GROW EXCITED AT THE PROSPECT OF TAKING AWAY THAT LIFE.
THE MORE YOU TEACH THESE BASTARDS THE "SANCTITY OF LIFE"...
...INNATE EVIL EXISTS IN THIS WORLD.
CAPTAIN... YOU REALLY SHOULD KNOW BY NOW!
NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO ...
SO WHAT? YOU CLAIM TO KNOW THE SANCTITY OF LIFE?

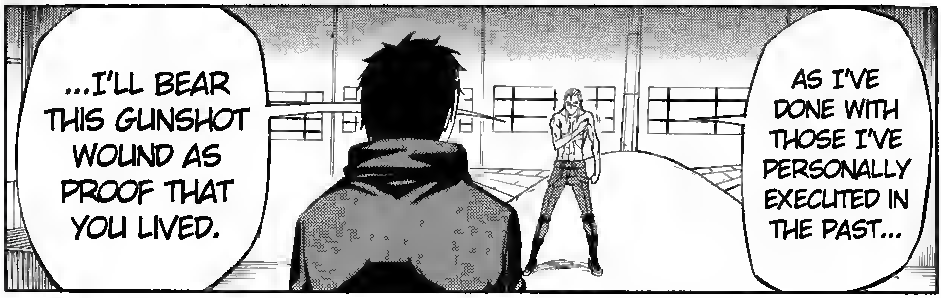
KRUNCH
...I WILL TAKE THINGS FURTHER!
AT THE DAWN OF A RESURGENCE IN VIOLENT CRIME...
KTING
...WE'LL RID OURSELVES OF THE DEATH BY RETALIATION SYSTEM.
...ANY AND ALL PEOPLE WHO'RE AT RISK OF COMMITTING VIOLENT CRIME IN THE FIRST PLACE!!
I WILL CREATE A NEW DEATH PENALTY SYSTEM! AND I WILL RAISE ITS GUILLOTINE ABOVE...
...IS THE CAPTAIN OF THAT SYSTEM'S NEW TASK FORCE.
THE NEXT ROLE I PLAY...

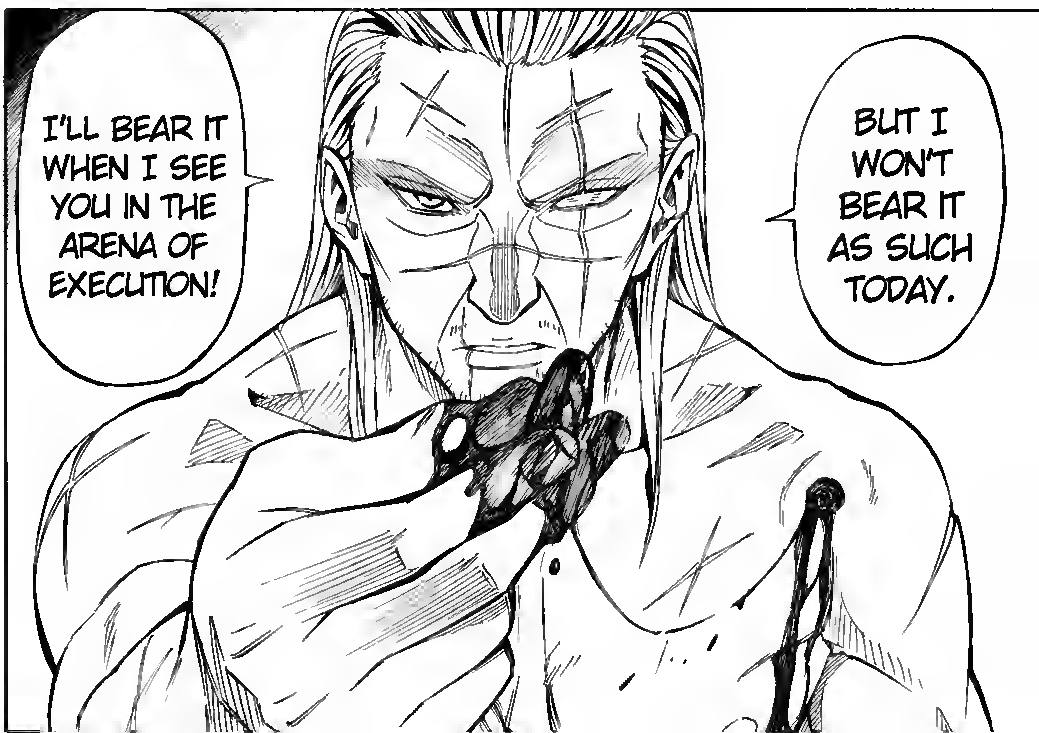
GIVE PEOPLE THE IMPRESSION THAT EVEN AN IOTA OF SUSPICION WILL GET THEM EXECUTED...
...AND THEY WON'T EVEN DARE COMMIT THE PETTIEST OF CRIMES.
DO YOU THINK YOU CAN TAKE SOMEONE'S LIFE BASED ON PURE SPECULATION?
ALL PEOPLE HAVE TO DO IS ACT IN A WAY THAT WON'T DRAW SUSPICION.
IN OTHER WORDS, IT'S A MODERN-DAY WITCH HUNT.
WE'LL REVIVE AND LEGALIZE THE LAWS OF 14TH THROUGH 17TH CENTURY EUROPE WITH OUR CURRENT TECHNOLOGY.
IF WE DO THAT AT OUR CURRENT LEVEL OF CIVILIZATION...
...WE'LL CREATE NOTHING BUT A MOUNTAIN OF FALSE ACCUSATIONS.
SHOULD WE MAKE A TIME MACHINE OR SOMETHING, THEN?
YOU HAVE EXPERIENCE AS A MERCENARY, RIGHT?
RUMMAGE

BECAUSE WE'RE IN A WAR WITH CRIME!
KCHAK
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
IT'S KILL OR BE KILLED !!

.....
.....
THOKK
I... CAN'T... BELIEVE THAT... MY EXECUTIONER... WOULD BE THE GUY... WHO SAVED MY LIFE...
YOU CARVED THIS SCAR INTO ME, "CHAN."
I'LL BEAR THIS SCAR AS PROOF THAT YOU LIVED...
...NOT ONLY AS THE FIRST TO BE CONDEMNED TO RETALIATION...
...BUT AS AN OLD WAR FRIEND AS WELL...


SLRRRCH
ZLLRCH
ZLLRCH
THUDSH


...I'LL BEAR THIS GUNSHOT WOUND AS PROOF THAT YOU LIVED.
AS I'VE DONE WITH THOSE I'VE PERSONALLY EXECUTED IN THE PAST...

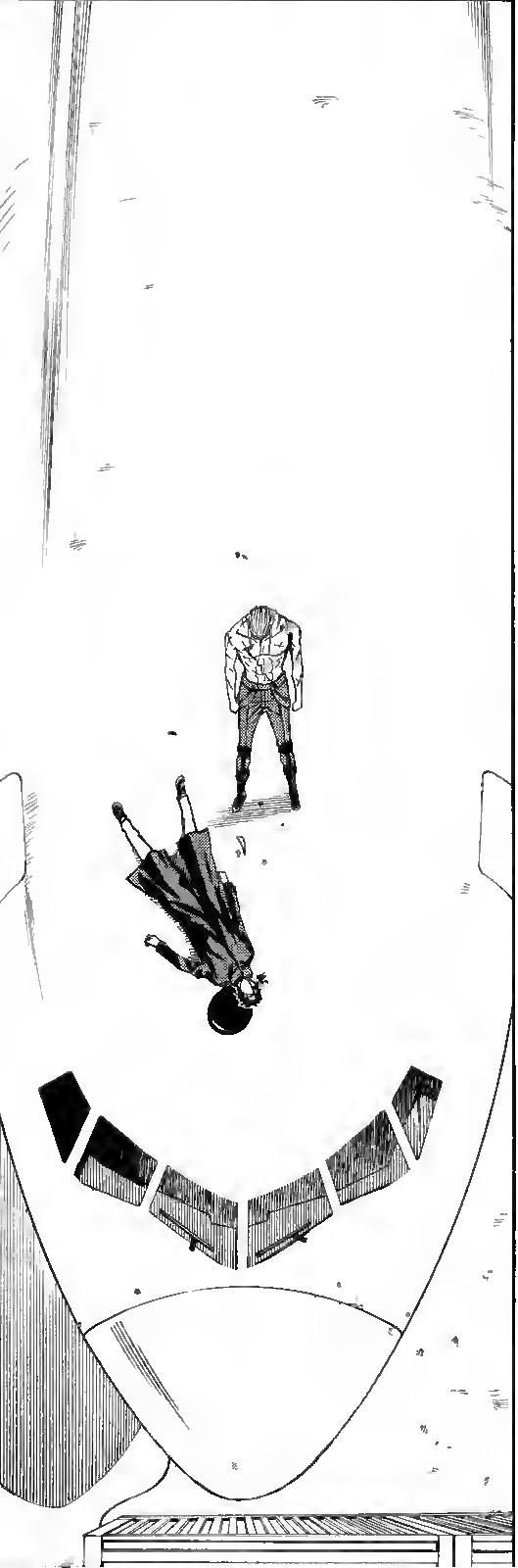

I'LL BEAR IT WHEN I SEE YOU IN THE ARENA OF EXECUTION!
BUT I WON'T BEAR IT AS SUCH TODAY.

FROM NOW ON, I WILL MURDER EVERY SINGLE ASSISTOR.
KTUP
THEN LET'S TRY THIS, SHALL WE?
IF YOU DON'T WANT THAT, THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO SPECULATE ON MY MOTIVES AND TAKE MY LIFE RIGHT NOW.
BUT IT'LL BE TOO LATE WHEN IT'S TIME FOR MY EXECUTION. EVERYONE'LL ALREADY BE DEAD BY THEN.
YOU MAKE YOUR MOVE AFTER I'VE MURDERED SOMEONE, RIGHT?
...ODAA-AA?!
SO HOW ABOUT IT...
BLAM BLAM
.....
SO HOW ABOUT IT?
KCHAK

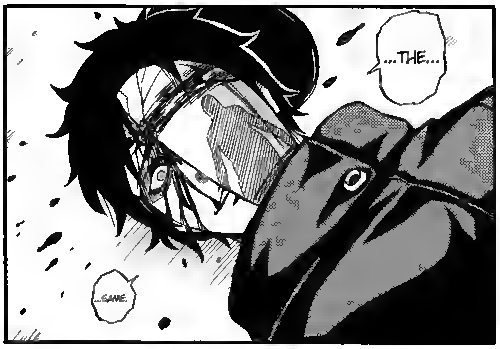
I SUPPOSE THIS WAY PALES...
AND I'M OUT OF BULLETS.
UNLESS I SEE HIM WITH A GUN, I CAN'T NECESSARILY HIT HIM, EH...?
CHIK
CHIK
...BEFORE KILLING HIM PURELY THROUGH MIRRORING HIS MOVES!
PLING
!?
FLICK

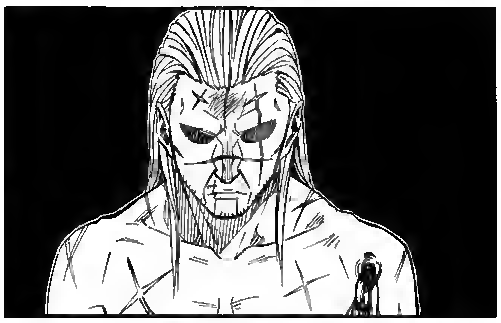
SPLORCH
KRAKK

I CAN'T BELIEVE... HE USED THE... BULLET...
THE SAME MOVE...
CLATTER
IT'S... JUST... AS I SAID...
...YOU DID IT...
IN... THE END...
...YOU GET IT... RIGHT?
SLURRCH
...IT'S... MY... WIN...
HOW-EVER...
...WE'RE... THE... SAME...
PLIK



THUDD

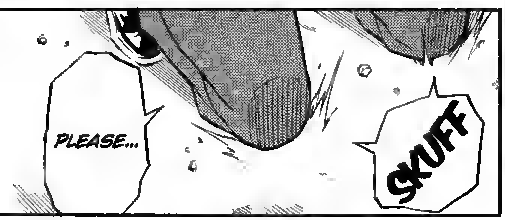

...THE...
GAME.

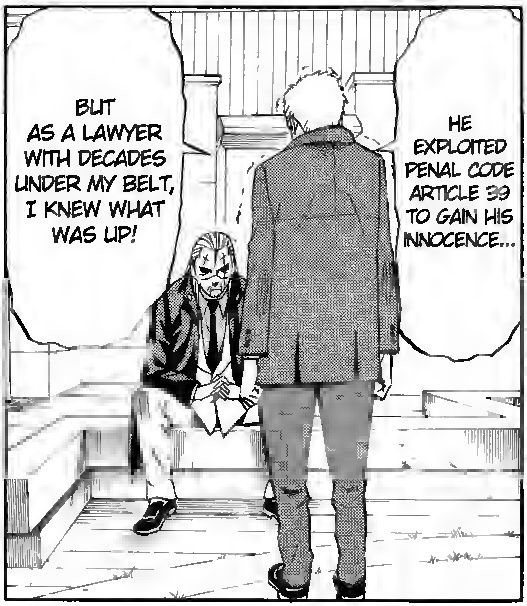


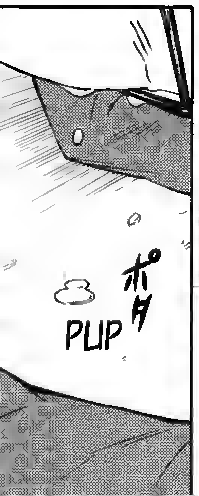
...WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE ACCUSED TO HAVE BEEN OF UNSOUND MIND AT THE TIME OF THE CRIME.
JUST AS HIS LAWYER ARGUED...
MONTHS LATER
裁判所
COURTHOUSE
...NOT GUILTY!
MURMUR
.....
MURMUR
THEREFORE, WE FIND THE ACCUSED, TAKOYA ZUBOSHI...
IT DOESN'T GET MORE IRONIC THAN THIS...
MURMUR
.....
THE FAMILY OF THE MURDER VICTIM IS THE CHAIRMAN OF THAT LAWYERS' GROUP THAT OPPOSES THE DEATH PENALTY, RIGHT?
MURMUR
TWITCH
MURMUR
!

NGH...
AH...
ガシャン ガシャン
CRASH
SHATTER
HHHHHH
CRACK
AH...
AA-AA-AH-HH-HH-H!!

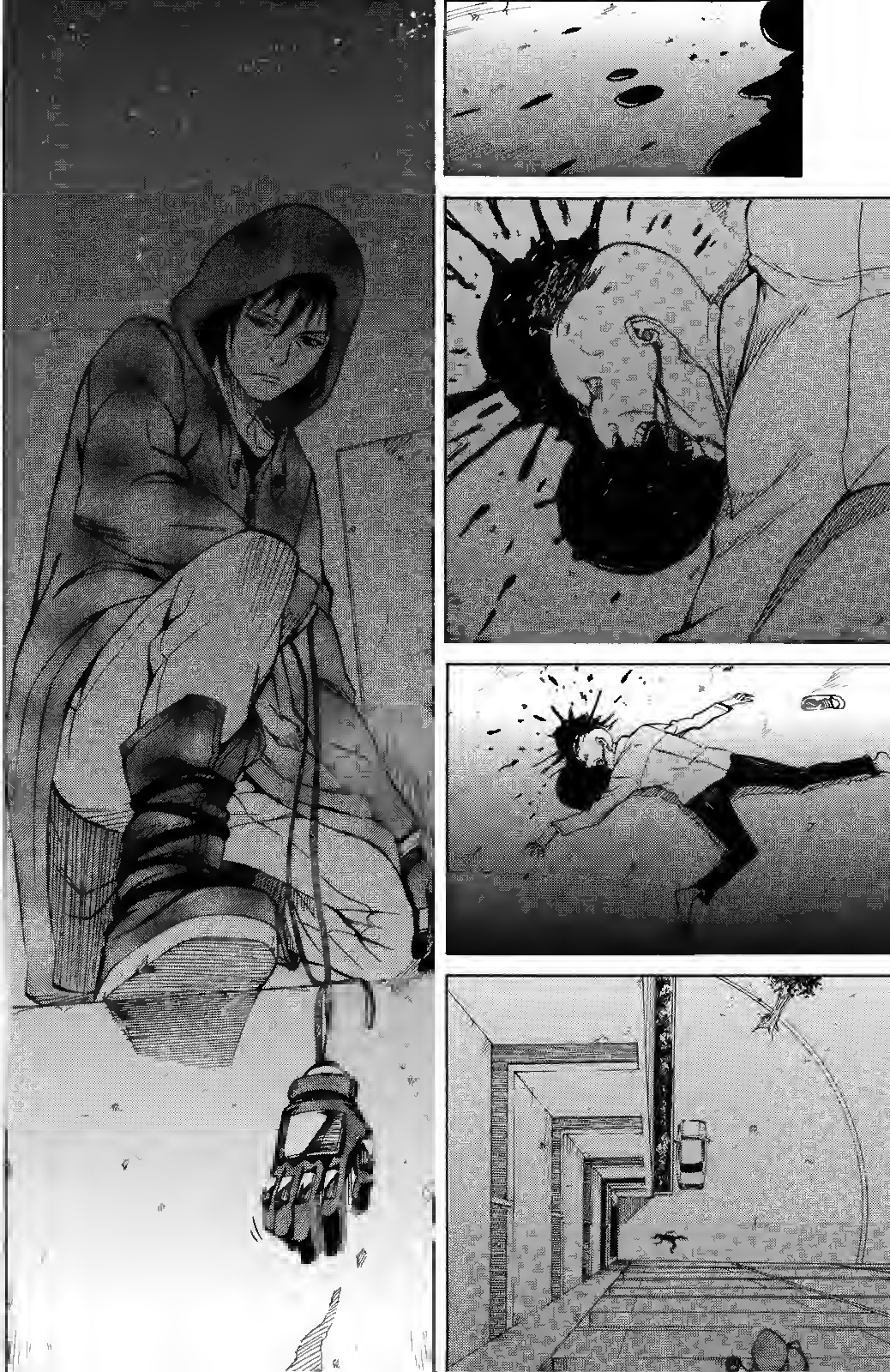
WHAT DOES A LAWYER WHO OPPOSES THE DEATH PENALTY WANT WITH ME?
WE'VE HEARD A LITTLE ABOUT YOU IN OUR CIRCLES, BY THE WAY...
IT'S AN HONOR TO BE KNOWN BY SOMEONE LIKE YOU.
.....
...TO THE INDESTRUCTIBLE WALL BETWEEN THE SYSTEM AND THE FAMILIES OF VICTIMS.
...I'VE WORKED WITH THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM ALL MY LIFE, BUT...
...WHEN MY WIFE WAS MURDERED, IT OPENED MY EYES...



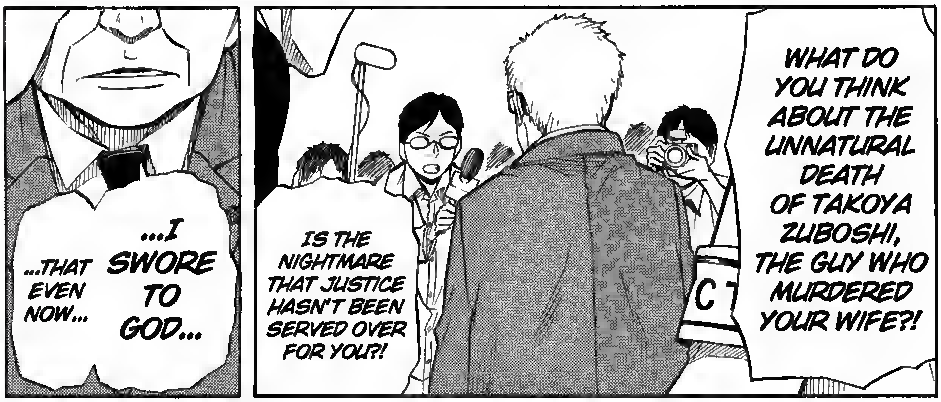


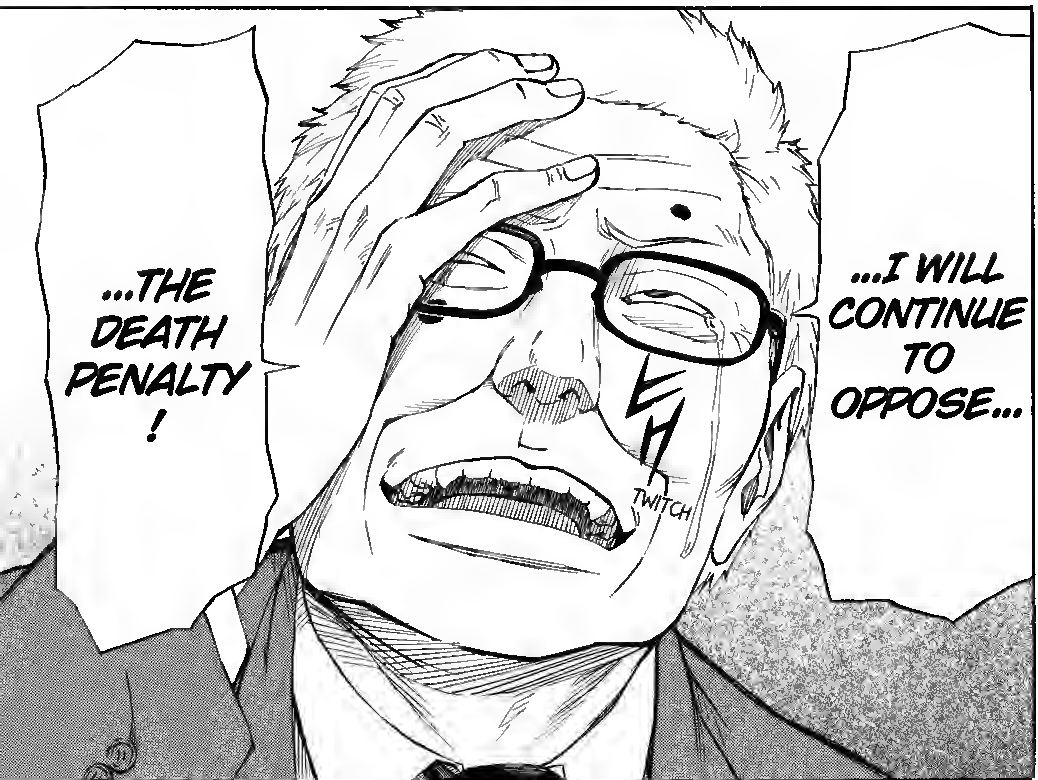


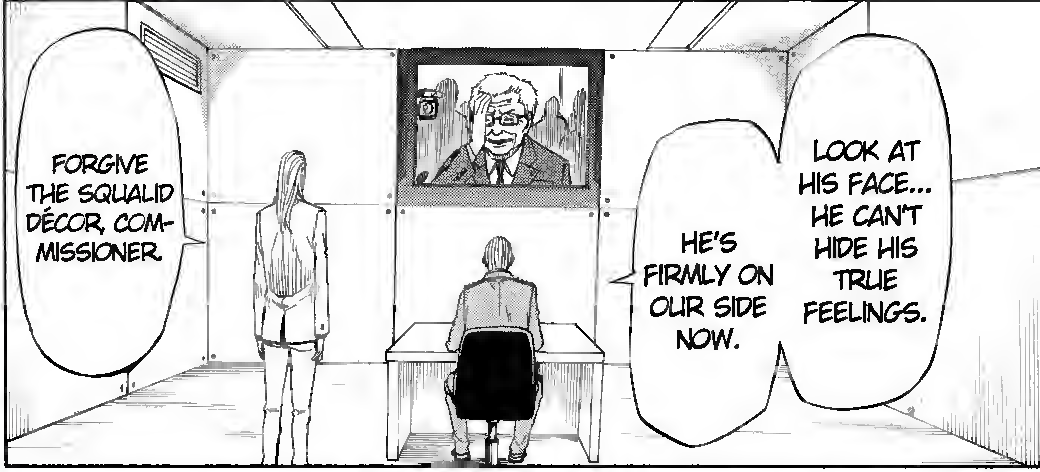
※ Penal Code Article 39 → 1. Conduct committed by those of unsound mind will not be punished.
※ 2. Conduct committed by those of diminished mental capacity will have their punishment reduced.

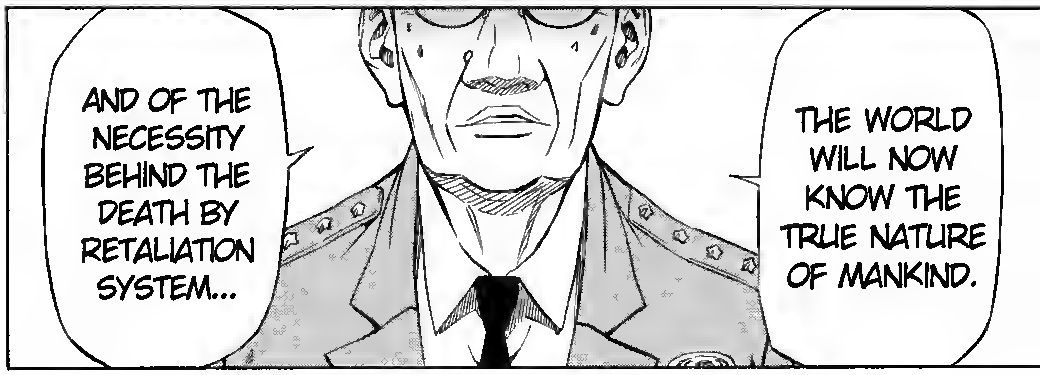


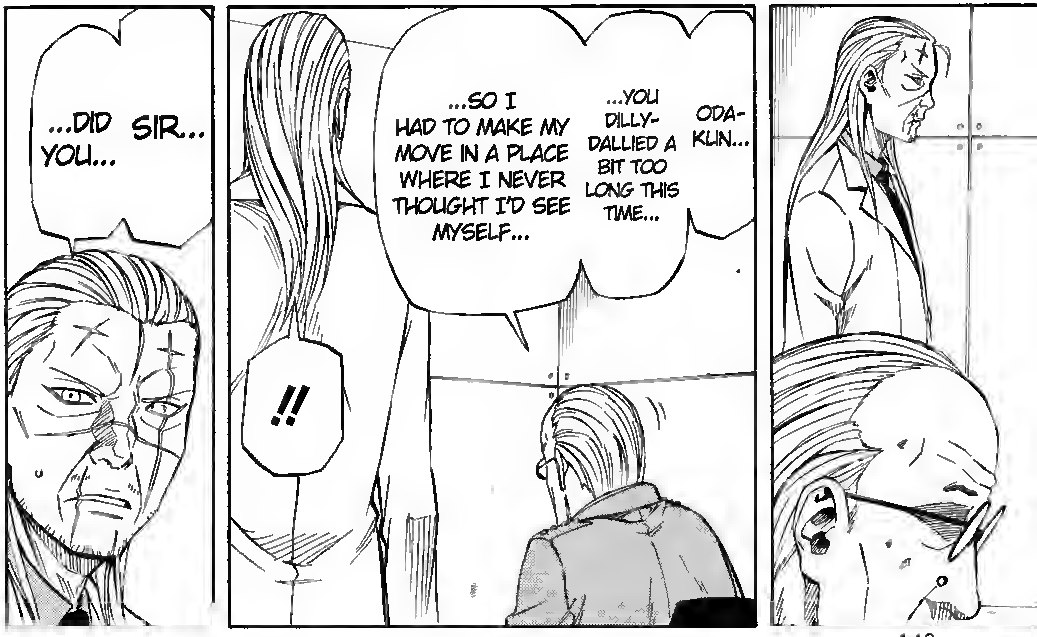
KSHAK
カシャ
KSHAK
カシャ
MR. TAKADA!
MR. TAKADA!


...I SWORE TO GOD...
...THAT EVEN NOW...
IS THE NIGHTMARE THAT JUSTICE HASN'T BEEN SERVED OVER FOR YOU?!
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE UNNATURAL DEATH OF TAKOYA ZUBOSHI, THE GUY WHO MURDERED YOUR WIFE?!


...I WILL CONTINUE TO OPPOSE...
TWITCH
...THE DEATH PENALTY!


FORGIVE THE SQUALID DÉCOR, COMMISSIONER.
LOOK AT HIS FACE... HE CAN'T HIDE HIS TRUE FEELINGS.
HE'S FIRMLY ON OUR SIDE NOW.


AND OF THE NECESSITY BEHIND THE DEATH BY RETALIATION SYSTEM...
THE WORLD WILL NOW KNOW THE TRUE NATURE OF MANKIND.


...DID YOU...
SIR...
!!
...SO I HAD TO MAKE MY MOVE IN A PLACE WHERE I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE MYSELF...
...YOU DILLY-DALLIED A BIT TOO LONG THIS TIME...
ODA-KUN...

...TO MURDER TAKADA'S WIFE...?
...LEAD TAKOYA ZUBOSHI...
TAP
TAP
IT'S FINE IF YOU'RE RAISING ONE OR TWO DIFFERENT BREEDS, BUT...
...WELL, LET'S JUST SAY HE SAVED ME A LITTLE TROUBLE.
IT SEEMS OUR LAPDOG WRAPPED THINGS UP, BUT...
...DON'T BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS THEM.
...BE SURE THAT THOSE DOGS...

TPP.
GRIP

English Digital Edition
Chapter 023

Sukedachi 09
助太刀09
Seishi Kishimoto

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